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Paul Widdison discusses Sales Intelligence



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The company

With nearly 30 years' experience in product, application know-how and customer service, Orbital Fasteners, based in Watford, Hertfordshire, is a leading online and telesales distributor of fixings, fasteners, tools and power tools.

Orbital's range continues to expand and its portfolio now comprises over 27,000 products from 300 different manufacturers.

To continue improvement in the operational effectiveness of its sales team and to support its ongoing successful growth, Orbital Fasteners has recently upgraded to Version 7 of the VECTA Sales Intelligence CRM solution.

This enables the sales team to see customer and sales information and log calls on their mobile devices, as well as on laptop or PC.

Intelligence Sells

VECTA is a web-based sales intelligence solution that analyses historical sales data in order to help companies increase their share of customer spend by highlighting sales opportunities. The software can identify potential problems with lost or drifting customers and generate detailed information on customer buying patterns prompting users to sell more proactively.

Orbital Fasteners is a good example of a business using technology effectively in order to improve productivity and this latest project will facilitate controlled sales growth and customer retention through the current uncertain economic climate. Whilst the business is constantly seeking improved processing efficiencies, it demands that I.T. projects demonstrably deliver the required results. As users of the EDP Group's CHARISMA application software for many years, Orbital work closely with EDP to ensure that their technology solutions are optimised. The objective is to ensure stability through proven, reliable and cost effective systems, leveraging new technology solutions only at the appropriate time. Recently, Orbital elected to move their I.T. systems to EDP's hosted service, reducing exposure and overheads whilst enabling the business to focus its resources on core competencies.

In common with many competitors, having a comprehensive range of products and a substantial customer base makes the process of identifying market trends and customer buying patterns a constant challenge. Although any business will recognise such changes in time, the need to be responsive and agile means Orbital places a high priority on their I.T. solutions, particularly in the area of sales and marketing.

Many businesses find that obtaining the necessary information to guide sales activity is time consuming and therefore does not happen effectively. The result of this is that sales people rely on 'gut feeling' and the feedback of customers and as a consequence, are significantly disadvantaged during sales conversations. Orbital recognised the impact of this approach and in order to improve the productivity of their sales team, elected to adopt VECTA.

Easily Identify 'Winners, Losers & Deserters'

With a controllable core product offering, suitable for a large target audience, they believed opportunities were being missed and issues not always identified quickly enough, thus impacting upon sales results and growth. Annually reviewing their data and classifying their 'winners, losers and deserters', i.e. those customers spending more, spending less, or having stopped buying, proved a routine and beneficial exercise. However, they wanted a manageable way to do this on an ongoing basis, to help optimise sales opportunities and reduce customer attrition.

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Business Benefits:

- Improved sales revenues month on month.
- Increase in sales to existing customer base.
- More proactive and planned approach to all sales calls.
- Improved information flow within the business.
- Improved visibility and management control.

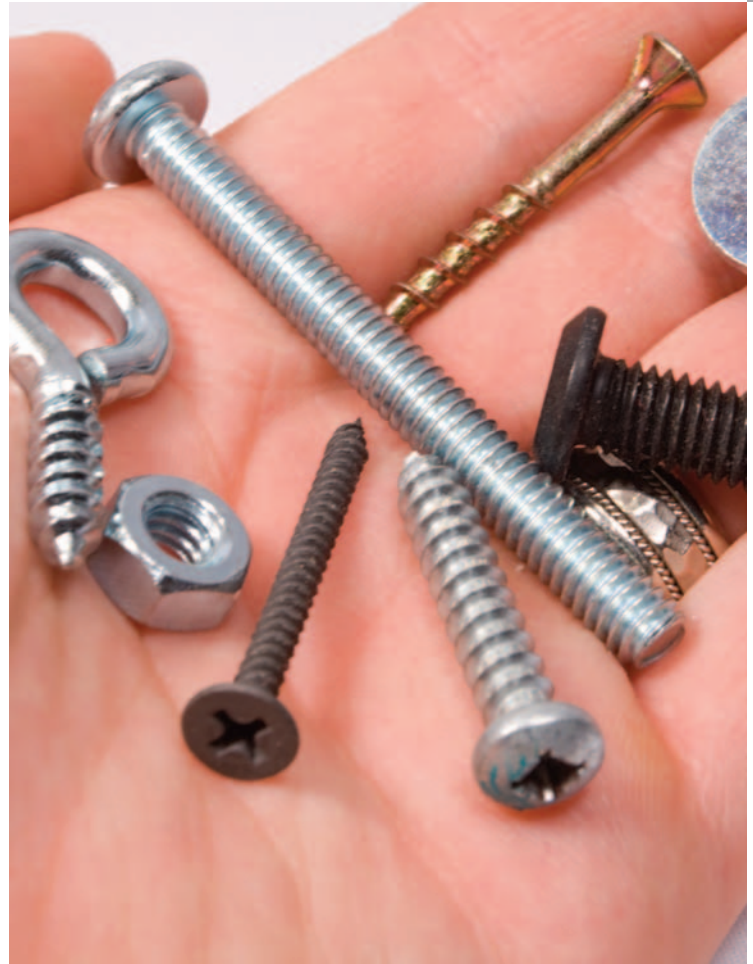
Orbital's Key Project Objectives

The objective therefore was to improve the information available to the sales team, providing timely and fast access to key opportunities, changes and any issues requiring attention. The focus was to improve call productivity, whilst also providing a simple way to record and provide visibility of customer contact information across the company. For Orbital, who start with a 'blank order book' each month, it is vital to spot quickly if a customer is not buying core product ranges or has not yet spent in that month.

So the primary project objectives were:

- To optimise time with customers.
- To ensure an appropriate reason and focus behind every sales call.
- To identify and address potential sales issues in order to secure more business.
- To increase market share and ensure certain sales opportunities are not missed

VECTA now enables Orbital to instantly and consistently identify 'winners, losers and deserters.' This helps to ensure that the sales team are as effective as possible, as they are now equipped with the key information at their fingertips and don't have to rely on the IT team or phone calls backwards and forwards with the office and they can much better understand their customers' buying patterns. This has resulted in time-savings across the board, reduced call costs and improved productivity.



Paul Widdison, Orbital Sales Manger commented: "VECTA has enabled the external sales team to work much more effectively, they use it to track their customer sales, identify products which are not being bought and log and pursue prospective customers in their areas. By using the information obtained through VECTA, an increase in the effectiveness of the calls made by the sales team has been seen."

The sales team is one of the most expensive assets of any distribution company, however, many companies lack suitable facilities and consequently fail to optimise this most important resource. Orbital has recently enjoyed exceptionally good sales results of some 30% above target. A major contributor to this success is the ability to instantly identify sales opportunities, address potential drift and focus on the most important discussion points for each account. The company is using VECTA to both drive and inform their sales team, to great effect.

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About Vecta Sales Solutions Ltd

Established in 1998, Vecta Sales Solutions Ltd provides world-class sales intelligence solutions that are used by thousands of people on a daily basis to dramatically improve their sales performance. Vecta operates from its headquarters in Sheffield and offices in Milton Keynes.

VECTA significantly improves sales effectiveness and boosts the sales performance and efficiencies of manufacturing, distribution and wholesale companies. Equipped with VECTA Sales Intelligence, companies gain optimum insight into their customers' buying patterns, contact history, product sales, territory results and much more.

VECTA provides instant visibility of relevant information and automatically analyses buying patterns to identify issues for attention and opportunities for future sales - it then highlights these to the sales team. Using VECTA, sales led organisations can eliminate wasted effort and ensure they focus on the opportunities and actions that benefit their company most.

VECTA quickly becomes invaluable throughout the business:

Managers have full visibility of sales and activity to aid decision making and direction to the team.

Sales people become more successful and productive with instant access to vital information about their customer buying patterns and account status - wherever they are and whenever they need it. It prompts them of where the best opportunities exist to ensure effective territory management and ensures that call preparation is efficient, relevant and fast.

The **Marketing team** can quickly pin-point the customers most suitable for specific marketing effort and which products they should be buying - results are simple to measure and monitor.

VECTA is much more than just reporting, easier than traditional BI and more informative than CRM alone. It helps businesses to increase average order size, improve customer retention and increase share of market, resulting in optimum revenue, margin and efficiencies.



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